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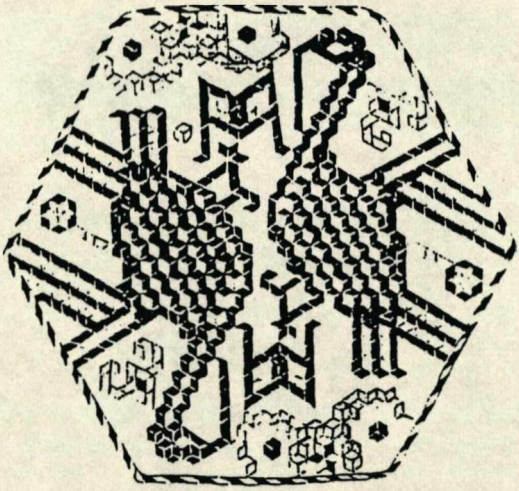
EAST TIMOR

STATEMENT TO THE UN DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE

NEW YORK, AUGUST 9, 1990



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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

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Statement on the question of East Timor
to the UN Decolonisation Committee, 9 August 1990
by
TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

Mr. Chairman and honourable members,
As the representative of TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, I am grateful for this opportunity to petition your Committee about East Timor. Our organisation has followed developments in East Timor since the Indonesian invasion in 1975. In the last fifteen years, much has changed in East Timor, but the basic situation remains the same: East Timor is illegally occupied by Indonesian troops.

I would like to speak about the features of colonial rule in East Timor today.

Army rule

The style and emphasis of Indonesian colonial rule in East Timor may differ from time to time, but one basic thing never changes: East Timor is an army project. Cosmetic changes like 'opening up' and the promotion of tourism have not changed anything for the people. East Timorese refugees who have recently fled their country to seek sanctuary in Portugal and Australia all confirm that East Timor is one big concentration camp for its long-suffering inhabitants.

Recent visitors to East Timor have been shocked by the conspicuous and overbearing presence of uniformed men who strut around as if they owned the place. There is a frequent turnover of troops from different parts of Indonesia. Some troops behave with such brutality that even senior officials appointed to run the 'provincial' administration have had cause to complain. It is widely known in East Timor that the governor, Mario Carrascalao, threatened to resign if Battalion 328, commanded by Colonel Prabowo, son-in-law of President Suharto, was not withdrawn. Prabowo's troops were responsible for a number of killings and atrocities from late 1988 to October 1989 when Pope John Paul II visited East Timor. Shortly before the visit, Prabowo and his battalion left East Timor.

In February this year, troop reinforcements arrived in East Timor, the day after Defence Minister General Murdani addressed a meeting of about four hundred civilian and military officials in Dili. The General's speech (recorded on a tape, a copy of which was later given to Mark Baker of the *Sunday Herald*, Melbourne) was a crude attempt to intimidate East Timorese officials. It was also meant as a warning to East Timorese parents to stop their children demonstrating on the streets. TAPOL has transcribed the speech and

translated it in full. I will quote only a few extracts:

Timtim [East Timor] *is part of Indonesia, and the Indonesian government, whoever the president is, the government will maintain this situation. So no-one should dream about creating a state of Timtim. If anyone wants to talk about a state of Timtim, read first, take a look first at the situation outside Indonesia, and study Indonesian history. From that you will know and be persuaded that the government has only one resolve, to preserve the continuity of the unitary state, not a federal state. A state that stretches from Sabang to Merauke, including East Timor....*

*I have already said, if you try to make your own state and the movement is strong, sufficiently strong, it will be crushed by ABRI [*the armed forces*]. ABRI may fail the first time, so it will try a second time, and a third time. But there have been bigger rebellions, there have been greater differences of opinion with the government than the small number calling themselves Fretilin, or whoever their sympathizers are here. We will crush them all! I repeat, we will crush them all!*

General Murdani also asserted that young East Timorese who demonstrated in Dili on 17 January, when Mr John Monjo, the US ambassador, was in town, were complaining about unemployment and asking the US ambassador for jobs. Photographs taken of the demonstrations show this to be false; the demonstrators were calling for independence.

Following the arrival of reinforcements, the army embarked on new military operations which started early in March and appear to have continued until some time in May. These were 'mopping-up' operations, in preparation for a visit to East Timor by a Portuguese parliamentary delegation in August or September. It is now certain that the visit will not take place this year which may explain why the operations were scaled down. The army was also continuing its relentless pursuit of Xanana Gusmao, the undisputed leader of the resistance forces and commander of *Falintil*, the armed resistance. His capture, dead or alive, would be hailed as a great victory by the Indonesian army but he continues to elude them.

'Hearts and minds' and the 'prosperity approach'

The other dimension of army rule is the 'hearts and minds' strategy. Some East Timor watchers find it difficult to understand how conventional warfare can go hand in hand with a 'hearts and minds' policy. Yet this has been characteristic of Indonesia's counter-insurgency strategy since the early eighties. Each new military commander in East Timor has started off by trying to win over the population. Each new commander has thought up plans

to make the Indonesian presence more palatable, only to be confronted by an impenetrable wall of alienation.

After fifteen years of illegal occupation, people in urban centres like Dili and Baucau have learned how to function within Indonesian structures and are adopting new forms of civil disobedience. One of the strategic assessments of the Indonesians was that time was on their side, that although the older Timorese were too inflexible and set in their ways to change, younger Timorese would learn to become good Indonesians and forget their own history. This simply has not happened. On the contrary, not only have the Indonesians lost the younger generation; the handful of Timorese who threw in their lot with the Indonesians and accepted positions in the colonial administration are now becoming disenchanted.

In December 1989, a year after East Timor was 'opened up' or, to use the official expression, 'brought into line with other provinces', the Indonesians announced that *Koopskam Timtim (Komando Operasi Keamanan Timor Timur)* the special military command structure created for the territory nearly a decade ago, had been disbanded. *Koopskam Timtim* which was in charge of war operations, was answerable to army headquarters in Jakarta, not to the regional military command in Bali. Its establishment was not publicised at the time; to have done so would have been proof of a continuing war situation, when Jakarta was claiming that armed resistance was virtually at an end. However, its disbandment was a very public affair, to show that now, at last, things *really were* back to normal. But Timorese refugees who have left the country recently, insist that the command still exists; all that has happened is that its headquarters have shifted from Dili to Baucau. This is borne out by a document smuggled abroad, an instruction from the chief-of-staff of the Udayana regional military command in Bali, to the *Commander of Koopskam Timtim*, dated 14 February 1990, to investigate the composition of staff and students at Externato Sao Jose in Dili, the only remaining Portuguese-language school. This would suggest that *Koopskam Timtim* has now been placed within the regional command structure, whilst the removal of its headquarters to Baucau puts it where the main military base is located anyway – and out of sight of foreign visitors.

The regional commander for the Nusa Tenggara regional military command which covers East Timor is Major-General Sintong Panjaitan, a veteran of the invasion of East Timor in 1975. Both he and Colonel Warouw, the military commander in Dili, are Christians, the assumption being that they can more easily win over a recalcitrant population. Muslim missionaries, *pendakwah*, have also been told to tone down their activities.

In May, Major-General Sintong Panjaitan announced that the army would now pursue a 'prosperity approach' (the English term was used). He claimed

that troop deployment in East Timor was down to 6 battalions and 3 engineering detachments, but made no mention of the many militia units and para-military troops being deployed. He also said that troops would not wear combat uniform but everyday, green army dress. As one senior officer put it: 'In their green uniforms, the troops look much less ferocious (*galak*)'. [*Editor*, 9 June 1990]

The 'prosperity approach' is also called *opster* (territorial operations) which incorporates the *AMD* (*ABRI Masuk Desa)* programme for soldiers to 'enter the villages'. This concept is based on the Javanese tradition of *gotong-royong* (mutual help) which expects villagers to tackle community problems together but is increasingly used to oblige people to work for the local authorities without pay. *AMD* intensifies the element of compulsion because of the army's high profile. When a unit calls a meeting in a village to discuss the plan of work, villagers are too terrified to stay away. The ideological message is clear: the army wants to foster the impression that it is 'united' with the population.

Underlying this approach is the assumption that people from outside have better farming methods than the 'backward' Timorese, the kind of message instilled in the Javanese when they were colonial subjects of the Dutch. Thus for instance, more Balinese farmers have been brought in to 'teach' Timorese how to grow corn and vegetables while Javanese fishermen have come to teach the Timorese how to fish.

But the army's civic mission is answered by civil disobedience, with open acts of defiance occurring in the urban centres. Youngsters have been as resourceful as their Palestinian soul-mates of the *intifada*. Besides the more spectacular demonstrations that greeted Pope John Paul last October and the US ambassador in January, young Timorese are spreading chaos by stoning cars, puncturing tires, burning down Indonesian markets, and pestering these alien intruders with questions like 'when are you going home?' On 17 July, schoolboys and girls at two schools in Dili (not the Portuguese-language school which has long been regarded as a centre of discontent but Indonesian-language schools) unfurled the Fretilin flag and shouted slogans, supporting the (now postponed) visit of Portuguese parliamentarians. The day they chose is proclaimed by Indonesia as 'integration day' when President signed the bill integrating East Timor in 1976.

Indonesian sociologists see the trauma of war

This spirit of alienation has been recorded by a team of senior Indonesian sociologists from Yogyakarta's *Gadjah Mada University* who undertook research in East Timor earlier this year, at the request of Bank Indonesia, the central bank. They produced a report so damaging to Indonesia's image that

the seminar at which it was to have been discussed was cancelled. The researchers spoke of a wave of rejectionism among youngsters in the towns, those still at school and school-leavers who have not found jobs. [p.82-83] Many teenagers, they said, have lost all fear of the army. After a recent incident when some youngsters were arrested, they

naturally did not escape "being taught a lesson" by the army - their heads were immersed in water, and they were beaten and kicked with army boots. But this did not curb their spirits. They regard such physical torture as a lesser evil than imprisonment of the spirit...

Pressure on school-children by the military means that they are being imprisoned in spirit with little space to move and constantly restrained and watched. When these pressures accumulate, it is hardly surprising for them to use 'rejectionist forms' as a way of affirming their presence.... and giving rise to tensions. This can be taken as a barometer of the degree of social unrest in East Timor. [p. 84]

Rejectionism is evident from what the team described as people's unwillingness to join in projects launched by the authorities whereas they enthusiastically respond to religious projects initiated by the church.

... the church holds sway over one important resource, the mass of the people; the government has plenty of funds and other resources such as coercive powers, but it does not 'possess' the people. [p. 9]

The researchers found mistrust among school-children of outsiders or 'newcomers' (*pendatang*) as they are called. This has turned children against the schools, with teachers complaining of bad behaviour, children running amok in class and a high level of truancy and physical attacks on teachers. [p. 107] As for Indonesia's insistence that *its* rule is incomparably better than Portuguese rule, the researchers had this to say:

The East Timorese don't believe official pronouncements that the Portuguese colonial era was a time of 'darkness' whereas the Indonesian era is one of 'light'. [p. 114]

In the words of the team, the people of East Timor are still suffering 'the trauma of war'. They argued: 'Whereas the Indonesian government considers that integration has resolved the matter of decolonisation, East Timorese society does not see it in that light'. [page 7]

Among their recommendations is a call 'to bring to an end the war

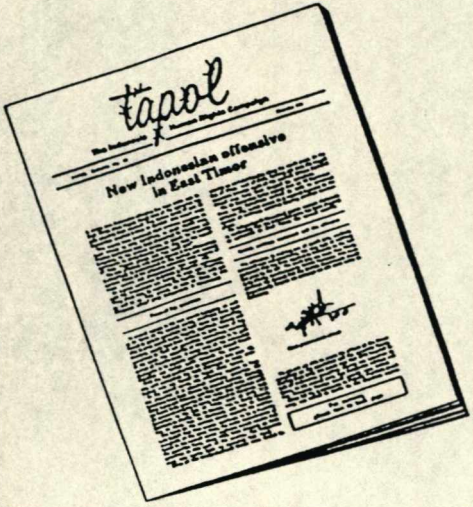
situation', an end to the 'overdose of army personnel' and a recommendation to end the government's resettlement programme.

The people in the resettlements should be allowed to return to their original villages so that they can till their own land and live in accordance with their own customs.

Mr Chairman and honourable members,
We in TAPOL regard the report by the Gadjah Mada team of sociologists as one of the most searing indictments of Indonesian rule in East Timor to date. The team members are academics who did not set out to make a case against integration. On the contrary, their brief was to help Indonesia's leading financial institution understand why the economy of East Timor is in a state of stagnation. But a month in East Timor, the third in a series of research visits by the same team, led them to produce findings and conclusions that go to the very heart of the East Timor tragedy, the issue of self-determination. We commend this report to the Decolonisation Committee for its careful consideration.

Thank you.

How often do you read about Indonesia in the press?



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